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ABSTRACT

Drawing upon both the fund-raising and outcomes literature, a gift-giving model is described that explains the connection between a variety of alumni demographic characteristics, previous university experiences, and gift-giving interest and capacity. Donor behavior is viewed as a function of both capacity and motivation. However, the personality and values that produce motivation and the socioeconomic status and achievements that produce capacity also are the products of the backgrounds and prior experiences of alumni. Academic experiences and demographic characteristics are both considered to be primary influences on the subsequent socioeconomic attainments of college graduates and their willingness to give. Using an alumni population at a public university, factor analytic techniques are used to derive a number of measures, involving demographic background, academic and social integration, capacity to give, motivation to give, and gift-giving behavior, reflecting the concepts in the model. The alumni questionnaire is appended. Contains 20 references. (Author/KM)

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A MODEL OF ALUMNI GIFT GIVING BEHAVIOR

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This paper was presented at the Twenty-Ninth Annual Forum of the Association for Institutional Research held at the Omni Inner Harbor Hotel and the Lord Baltimore Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland, April 30 - May 3, 1989. This paper was reviewed by the AIR Forum Publications Committee and was judged to be of high quality and of interest to others concerned with the research of higher education. It has therefore been selected to be included in the ERIC Collection of Forum Papers.

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A MODEL OF ALUMNI GIFT GIVING:

Measures Associated with Motivation and Capacity

Introduction and Conceptual Framework

Among the nation's public institutions of higher education, there are great variations in the support they receive from private gifts. Some have active and generous Alumni and others do not. Even individual campuses find great variability in the willingness of Alumni to support their alma mater. In fact, most public universities and colleges do not have large or well organized programs to solicit alumni contributions. In the tightening fiscal climate of the eighties, many public institutions are anxious to increase alumni generosity as a means of gaining financial flexibility. Often, Institutional Research is called upon to be a consultant, if not a key participant, in conducting alumni surveys and building the databases on which a more effective gift giving program is based.

Institutional Research's involvement in alumni gift giving programs often is a natural result of both technical research expertise and our interest in outcomes assessment. One long term outcome from the college experience can be gift giving from former students. Giving is a tangible symbol of the alumni's esteem for their alma mater. Private universities and colleges, being much more dependent upon alumni generosity, have measured this outcome for years, and have developed methods and systems to maximize their potential returns.

Kotler at Northwestern increased our understanding of successful fund raising by the application of marketing concepts to the field of higher education (1983). Paton at Rochester developed a conceptual framework for donor behavior based upon microeconomic principles, such as expenditures (cost) versus revenues (return), and capacity versus predisposition (1986).

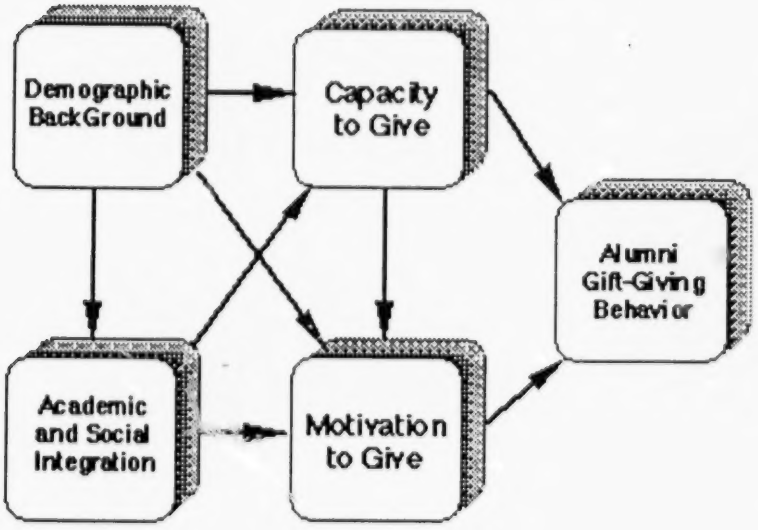
Dunn (1985) at Tufts developed a computer system which projects solicitation targets for alumni based largely on the decade groupings of alumni. Connolly and Blanchette (1986) at Wesleyan articulated a conceptual framework based on Paton's work. Their framework operates from the twin concepts of alumni capacity and motivation as key predictor variables. In the public sector, the Melchiori/Szady ranking model has received a good deal of attention (1988). Their work at the University of Michigan has provided the field with a practical framework and methodology for gathering an array of detailed data about the traits of gift givers and comparing them to non-givers. Michigan's solicitation program is based on such analysis (Melchiori, 1988).

The conceptual framework for our research has its roots in two branches of the higher education literature. First, we are drawing upon concepts from the development and fund raising literature as cited above. Secondly, we are applying concepts from the assessment literature which views college outcomes as a combined function of pre-college characteristics and college experiences.

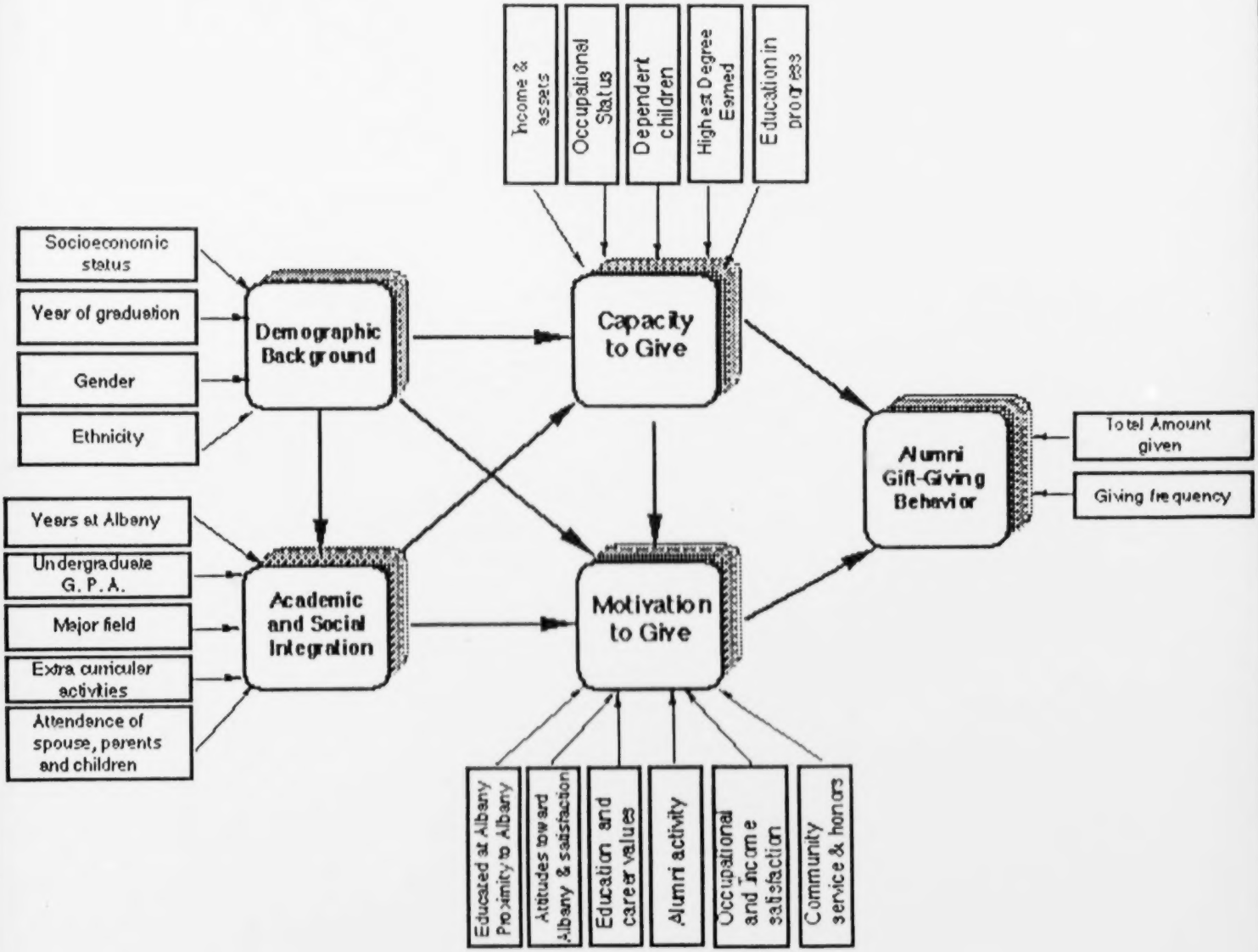
Several authors have linked the role of schooling in general and college education in particular to subsequent socioeconomic attainment (Bowen, 1977; Pace, 1979). The longitudinal impacts of colleges and universities on their students have been the focus of much discussion and study (Astin, 1977; Chickering, 1969; Feldman and Newcomb, 1969; Pascarella, 1985). Building especially on the theoretical contributions by Chickering (1969) and Tinto (1975), Smart and Pascarella (1986) developed a path model which assesses the contribution of various pre-college characteristics, institutional characteristics, and campus experiences to the socioeconomic achievements of a 1980 population who entered college in 1971.

Our study draws key concepts from Melchiori, Connolly and Blanchette, and Smart and Pascarella in an attempt to build a gift giving model which explains the relationships among a variety of Alumni variables. The conceptual elements of the model are shown in Figure 1. Gift giving behavior is viewed as a function of both capacity and motivation. However, the personality and values which produce motivation, and the socioeconomic status and achievements which produce capacity also are the products of background factors and prior experiences. Academic and social integration and demographic characteristics are considered to be primary influences on the subsequent socioeconomic attainments of college graduates and their willingness to give.

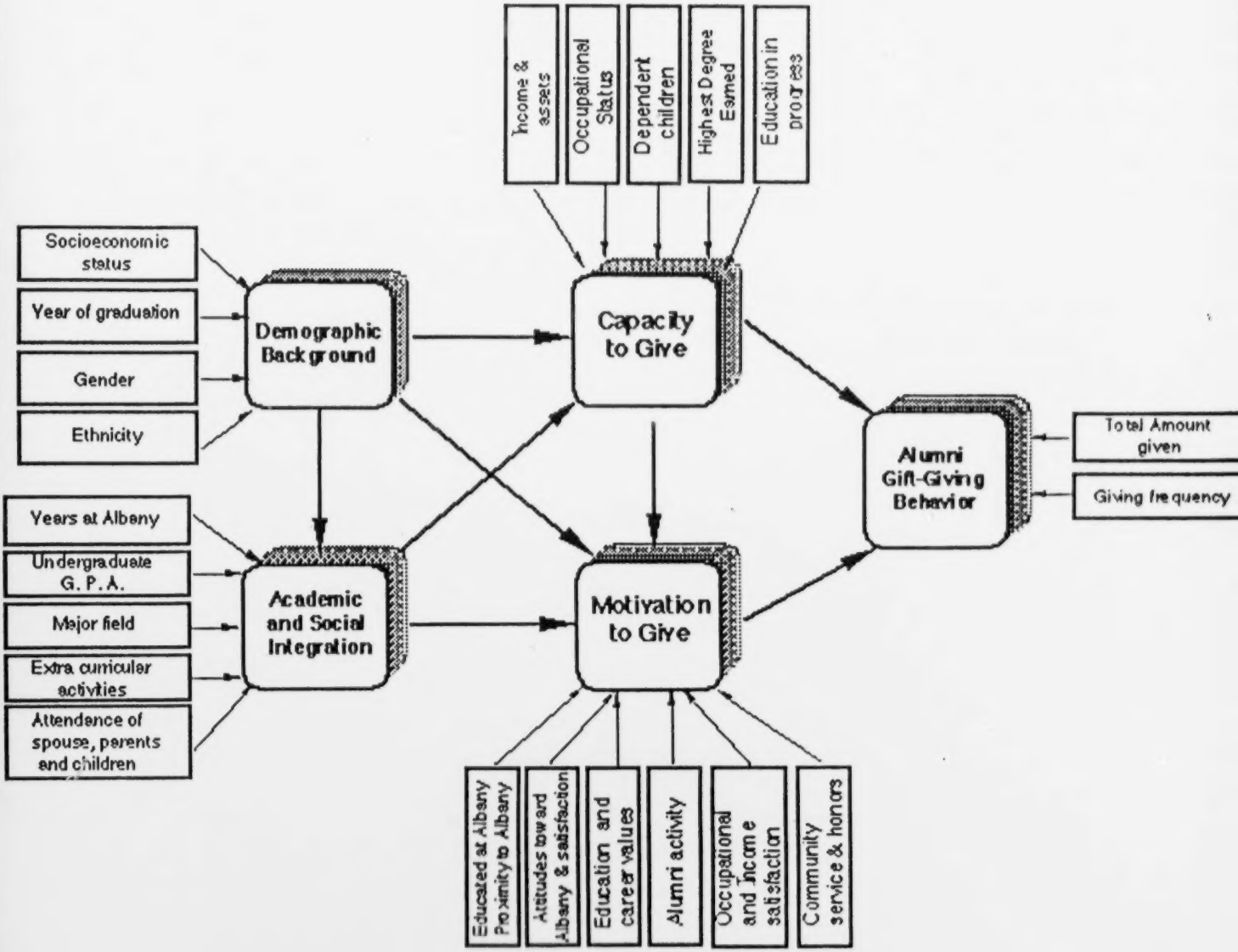
STRUCTURAL MODEL OF ALUMNI GIFT GIVING BEHAVIOR



THEORETICAL MODEL OF ALUMNI GIFT GIVING BEHAVIOR



THEORETICAL MODEL OF ALUMNI GIFT GIVING BEHAVIOR



METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to identify current alumni characteristics, as well as prior experiences, which are associated with donor behavior. We were especially interested in developing measures of motivation because they have been more problematical in the development field. The data for this study have been collected from Albany alumni and were gathered from two different sources: A 1987 Institutional Research alumni survey of graduates from five, ten, and fifteen years earlier, and an extract from the university's alumni database. The alumni survey had a 40% response rate (1330 respondents overall).

Figure 2 identifies the variables being used to measure the concepts in Figure 1. Building on the work of those noted above, we have collected data on a variety of demographic, academic, capacity, and motivation variables.

DEMOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

GRADUATION YEAR: The year the most recent degree earned from Albany was granted.

PARENTS' SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS: Reported occupation and educational level of the respondents' parents at the time of their study at Albany.

SEX: The gender of the respondent.

ETHNICITY: The ethnicity of the respondent.

ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION

GRADE POINT AVERAGE: The self-reported undergraduate grade point average of the respondent.

MAJOR: Field of study at ALbany.

UNDERGRADUATE ACTIVITIES: The number of undergraduate activities the respondent was involved in, including athletics, student government, and membership in a fraternity or sorority, among others.

INTERGENERATIONAL ATTENDANCE: The number of the respondent's parents, spouse or children who attended Albany.

CAPACITY TO GIVE

We have identified four positive and two negative measures to reflect giving capacity:

INCOME: This variable is self-reported in the survey in ranges of (1) less than $10,000 (2) $10,000-14,999 (3) $15,000-24,999 (4) $25,000-34,999 (5) $35,000-49,999 (6) $50,000-99,999 (7) $100,000-199,999 (8) $200,000 or more.

FINANCIAL ASSETS: No measures yet developed. Financial assets are more difficult to ask alumni to provide directly, so we currently have nothing on the database.

OCCUPATIONAL STATUS: This variable is the socioeconomic index of the respondent's occupation. The concept of occupational socioeconomic status, as developed by Duncan (1961) refers to an attribute of a specific occupation. Duncan's socioeconomic index (SEI) has been developed for all occupations referenced by the Alphabetical Index of Occupations and Industries (US Bureau of the Census, 1960).

HIGHEST DEGREE: The highest educational level attained by the respondents.

ENROLLMENT: This variable indicates whether the respondent is still enrolled in a graduate degree program, and is assumed to reflect negatively on gift giving capacity.

NUMBER AND AGES OF DEPENDENT CHILDREN: The support of school age children is assumed to be negatively related to gift giving, especially if the children attend some college other than Albany.

MOTIVATION TO GIVE

Presumably, donor motivation is based in part on the nature of the educational experience and the geographical isolation from fellow alumni. A person's background and undergraduate experiences may also lead them to possess rather specialized interests which have an impact upon alumni participation and giving attitudes. We have listed below some of our measures for these. But motivation to contribute financially to the University also is based upon values and attitudes toward a liberal arts education, community involvement, and intrinsic versus extrinsic career rewards. We have used factor analysis to construct a series of scales which reflect the respondents attitudes and values and the extent to which the Albany experience enhanced the attainment of those abilities and traits which they now consider to be important.

ALBANY EXCLUSIVENESS: A measure of the respondent's educational attachment, based on the number and levels of degrees the respondent received solely from Albany. A low value was assigned to those who received one degree from Albany and multiple degrees elsewhere. A high value was given to those who received multiple degrees at Albany and none elsewhere.

PROXIMITY: The current geographical proximity of the respondent to the University at Albany.

TWELVE: Twelve fundamental skills and abilities which alumni universally selected as highly important in their lives and careers. On one scale (Alpha=.84), we ask alumni to rate their importance, and on another (Alpha=.87), they rate the extent to which these were enhanced at Albany. The Appendix shows the question which solicits this information and summarizes recent alumni responses.

SCIENTIFIC: We ask alumni first to rate the importance of various scientific and mathematical skills, and secondly to rate the extent to which these were enhanced at Albany.

HUMANISTIC:. We ask alumni first to rate the importance of various humanistic skills, and secondly to rate the extent to which these were enhanced at Albany.

SATISFACTION CHANGE: An indication whether the respondents' satisfaction with their education at Albany has increased, decreased, or remained the same over the years.

DOOVER1: If the respondents did it all over again, would they attend the University at Albany?

DOOVER2: If the respondents did it all over again, would they select the same major?

DOOVER3: If the respondents did it all over again would they pursue the same career?

FACULTY: The grades which respondents' give the faculty of their department and the University as a whole. (A-F)

TRAINING: The grades which respondents give the preparation for a career or Graduate/Professional school they received in their department and the University as a whole. (A-F)

ADVISING: The grades which respondents give the advising they received in their department and the University as a whole.(A-F)

STULIFE: The grades which respondents give of the quality of student life at the University. (A-F)

INTRINSIC REWARDS AND SATISFACTION: These scales of items ask alumni first to rate the importance of job characteristics such as intellectual challenge, feelings of accomplishment, and interest in their work (Alpha=.73), and secondly to rate their current level of satisfaction with these items (Alpha=.86). The Appendix shows the question which solicits this information and summarizes recent findings.

EXTRINSIC REWARDS AND SATISFACTION: These scales of items ask alumni first to rate the value placed on having a high income and social status, and secondly to indicate their current level of satisfaction with these items.

EASYWORK: These scales of items ask alumni first to indicate the importance placed on such job characteristics as pleasant surroundings, low work pressure, congenial co-workers and customers. Secondly, respondents described their level of satisfaction with these characteristics.

SERVICE: Hours per week of volunteer work for community, service, environmental, or political organizations.

MEMBER: Membership and leadership in civic or cultural organizations, service clubs, corporate boards, and professional associations.

HONORS: Special honors, awards, or recognition received since graduating from Albany.

ALUMNI ACTIVITIES: The number of alumni activities the respondent has participated in during the 1980's.

GIFT-GIVING BEHAVIOR

GIVING FREQUENCY: This variable indicates how many times in the years 1983 to 1989 the respondent gave to the annual fund drive. This measure identifies those who give regularly, though perhaps in small amounts. Persistence by low end donors is often a predictor of future major gifts.

GRANDTOTAL: This dependent variable is the total dollar value the respondent gave between the years 1983 and 1989.

RESULTS and CONCLUSION

We are encouraged by the factor analytic results from the 1987 survey, and believe that we have developed a number of potentially useful measures of alumni attitudes, values, and motivation. The irony is that our research has been frustrated, at least in part, by incomplete gift giving information. We learned only recently that the alumni database does not contain department-specific gifts, and since our current sample is departmentally based, the lack of this information seems critical. We are in the process of designing a strategy to correct this deficiency.

Another limitation of our efforts pertains to our target population. For the initial survey, which was motivated for educational assessment rather than fund raising purposes, we selected a population of graduates from five academic fields who received their degrees five, ten, and fifteen years earlier. This gives us a good base on which to build future studies and to track the respondents longitudinally, but the group generally is not in a position to make major gifts to the University. We have selected another set of fields, and this summer will gather responses from a more mature group of alumni.

Nevertheless, we are optimistic about the usefulness of our model. Our work promises to identify the statistical associations between various alumni characteristics and prior campus experiences which lead to subsequent gift giving behavior. To test the usefulness of the model for explaining differences in alumni gift giving, we intend to employ multivariate techniques to estimate the direct and indirect effects of the background traits and college experiences upon motivation and capacity to give. As a next step, we will use LOGIT or discriminant analysis to examine the differences between donors and nondonors. Then multiple regression will be employed to identify the best mix of variables which maximizes our prediction of gift giving behavior. This will allow the development office eventually to identify those who appear to be giving below their predicted amount.

As a long range goal, we plan to utilize our assessment database which tracks cohorts of freshmen through graduation. This growing database was begun by Patrick Terenzini and contains a rich array of variables and scales reflecting academic and social integration. Eventually, LISREL will be employed and is a valuable computer tool designed to handle models with both directly observed and unmeasured latent variables, measurement errors, and reciprocal causation. The overall fit of the model and specific parametric hypotheses will be assessed by means of a large sample chi-square test.

This line of research contributes positively to university effectiveness. Our analysis gives development professionals a more sophisticated framework and tactical database. It strengthens the ties between institutional research and development and helps to shape future fund raising strategies.

This model illustrates the potentially diverse uses of survey data gathered for assessment purposes. The use of donor behavior as an outcomes measure has implications also for both student affairs and academic affairs because of the linkage to academic and social integration (See Volkwein, et.al. 1988). By merging key concepts from the outcomes literature and the development literature, this theoretical framework suggests a strong connection between the quality of the undergraduate experience and subsequent donor behavior. We invite others to test our model and use our measures, and we hope the results make a useful conceptual contribution to the field of higher education.

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6. The list below contains some abilities and skills. Please indicate how important each is in your current endeavors (column A) and the extent to which each ability was enhanced by your studies and experiences at Albany (column B). (Circle one in Column A and one in Column B.)

ABILITIES/SKILLS	Column A: Importance in Current Endeavors					Column B: Enhanced This Ability While at Albany				
	Not Import.		Moderately Import.		Essential	Not At All		Moderately		Extremely
Write effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Listen effectively	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Speak effectively.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Understand myself: abilities, limitations, interests, & personality	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Acquire new skill & knowledge on my own. . .	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Function independently, without supervision.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Lead and supervise tasks & groups of people.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluate & choose between alternative courses of action.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Function effectively as a member of a team .	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Cope with conflict	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Exercise problem solving skills.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Think analytically & logically	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Understand scientific findings	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Utilize computing skills	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Carryout Research.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Use statistics	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Produce Scholarship.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Employ Scientific methods.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Understand mathematical concepts	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Analyze scientific data.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Solve mathematical problems.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciate artistic & creative expression. .	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Know literature of recognized merit.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Place current problems in historical perspective.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Analyze literature critically.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Use Foreign Language Skills.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Understand cultural differences.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Adapt to different social situations	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Take action on moral & ethical issues. . . .	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Relate well to people of different races . .	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Learn how to learn	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Exercise personal responsibility	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain Openness to new ideas	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Possess clear goals.	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Exercise self-discipline	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

15. Each of the following items can be related to one's career. Please react to them in two ways. First, in column A, rate the importance of each to your specific career. Second, in column B, rate how satisfied you are with each job characteristic.
(If you are currently unemployed, skip the Column B choices.)

Job Characteristics	Column A: Importance to Your Specific Career Not Import.		Moderately Import.		Essential	Column B: Current Satisfaction Level Not At All		Satisfied Moderately		Extremely Satisfied
Intellectual challenge	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
High current salary and benefits	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity to exercise initiative	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Future income potential	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Required ethical standards are consistent with my own	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Feelings of accomplishment	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity to be creative	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Opportunity for job advancement	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
The opportunity to work for social change	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Social status or recognition	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
A stable, secure future	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasant physical work environment	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Limited stress or low work pressure	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Autonomy or freedom from supervision	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Reasonable working hours	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Freedom from organizational politics	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Interest in the day-to-day work that is involved	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Graduate Degrees required	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Congenial/Compatible work associates	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasantness of clients/customers	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

22. Please take this opportunity to evaluate your major department and SUNY Albany as a whole by writing the appropriate grade:
(You may use pluses and minuses)

	Your Major Department	Albany in General	
A = Excellent	_____	_____	Quality of instruction
B = Good	_____	_____	Quality of academic advising
C = Average	_____	_____	Availability of faculty outside of class
D = Poor	_____	_____	Faculty interest in your academic/intellectual development
F = Failure	_____	_____	Faculty respect for students as people
	_____	_____	Preparation for Graduate/Professional School
	_____	_____	Preparation for a Career
	_____	_____	Overall quality of student life